

Lethbridge Experimental Station Weekly Letter

A CHANGE IN OUR METHODS

Not many years ago most farmers waited until June 1st to seed their spring crops, particularly grasses. At that time the land selected was summerfallow. The seed was planted with a nurse crop about two inches deep, and this was followed by the pucker. What contrast there is between that method and the one now in use. We now seed grass in the fall, in clean, undisturbed grain stubble, about one-half inch deep.

Fall seeding of grass was given extensive study in the early years of the P.F.R.A. regrassing program.

Both early and late fall proved desirable, the early fall seedings being made between September 1st and 15 and late fall seedings just before freeze-up. If moisture conditions were favorable grasses seeded in early fall made some growth before winter. Late fall seedings lie dormant under the snow but made quick growth early in the spring. This procedure was particularly suitable for crested wheatgrass which grows best in cool weather.

The use of nurse crops was discontinued because they use too much moisture, and the severe competition of a nurse crop in poor grass stands. However, protection for the small grass seedlings in very desirable and so the practice of seeding in stubble arose. Even seeding in dead annual weeds proved better than seeding with a nurse crop.

Most forage crop seeds are small and consequently have very little food reserve. It is essential therefore that the seed be near the soil surface in order that the little seedlings will break through to sunlight shortly after germinating. Practical-

ly all forage crops do best when seeded in the upper half-inch of soil. For dry land pastures it is not too late to seed crested wheatgrass or brome. Drill the seed into clean stubble about half an inch deep just before the ground freezes.

BACTERIAL RING ROT CAN BE PREVENTED BY SECOND-HAND BAGS

In spite of careful inspections carried out by officials of the Dominion Department of Agriculture during the production and harvest of Canadian Certified seed potatoes, it is occasionally found that fields planted with certified seed will contain plants or tubers affected with bacterial ring rot. While it is not always possible to determine the source of infection in such cases, there are grounds for suspecting that all too often the seed was contaminated at digging time or in storage — at point of origin or at distributing centres — through the use of second hand bags.

Officials of the Dominion Department of Agriculture emphasize that it is most important to keep Canadian Certified seed free of this disease. The reputation of the individual grower, and of Canada as a whole, for the production of reliable seed potatoes, will be seriously impaired if stock carrying official certification tags is found to contain ring rot. Therefore, the most thorough precautions must be taken by each grower to guard his crop against infection from every possible source.

Every certified seed potato grow-

er should be familiar with the danger of contaminating his seed stock by using planters diggers or other equipment that has been used on a neighboring farm. The grower's safest plan, says agricultural officials, is to have his own equipment, and not lend it to his neighbor.

If it is necessary to lend, borrow or do custom work, equipment should be disinfected thoroughly before being moved from one farm to another. Some growers have overlooked however the danger of infection through the use of second hand bags during digging or shipping operations. These bags may previously contained table potatoes that were infected with ring rot, and it is dangerous to the seed crop to bring such sacks to a seed farm unless they are thoroughly disinfected. To disinfect such sacks it is suggested that they be soaked for two hours in a solution of formaldehyde—one pint to twenty five gallons of water.

Eternal vigilance is the price of safety, officials of the Dominion Plant Protection Division point out. Growers should keep constant watch especially at digging time—for signs of bacterial ring rot. Any potatoes showing soft rot at this time should be objects of suspicion, and samples should be sent to the Dominion Laboratory of Plant Pathology in the Province, or to the local seed potato inspector. The present high reputation of Canadian certified seed potatoes can be maintained only by the co-operation of all concerned, in taking every precaution to prevent the spread of this destructive disease.

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ALBERTA'S CAR TOTAL HITS RECORD LEVEL

Alberta's car registrations for this year already have hit record levels and are continuing to climb, according to information received by officials of the Alberta Motor Association. Consequently the revenue from this fruitful source will be greater than ever for the provincial government's treasury.

For the six months ended Sept. 30 the total number of passenger car licenses issued was 107,311. This was a gain of 8,927 over the same period in 1947, which in itself was a record year. Many new cars are on the highways, serving to boost the registration total while tourist motoring also has been a prime factor.

This year, Alberta probably will have 200,000 licensed car drivers. Up to the end of September the total was 191,259, as against 178,531 in the similar period of last year.

Officials are confident that by the end of the present license year March 31, 1949, Alberta will hold a topmost place among provinces which have made outstanding gains in car registrations.

There are good prospects that this year's total even will be exceeded in 1949, with a greatly increased holiday and tourist movement expected and many more motor vehicles on the highways.

With car licenses continuing to mount, there is every need of carrying on highway improvements designed to meet all demands and to build roads of a high standard which will appeal to motorists whether they live in Alberta or come here in touring cars.

The Misses Hazel and Vivian Fawns were here from Calgary Monday to attend the funeral of their uncle.

Mr. and Mrs. Wilford A. Heninger have returned home from the coast, Mr. Heninger being much improved in health.



SEEDTIME and HARVEST

By DR. F. J. GREANEY
Director,
Lethbridge Experimental Station,
Winnipeg, Manitoba.

The Soil Which Sustains Us
Drought has again cast its dark shadow across the farmlands of Western Canada. This fall, as a result of one of the driest seasons in the history of western agriculture, many districts throughout the prairie provinces have experienced serious soil drifting and dust storms. These unfortunate experiences are but a preview of what will be normal conditions in Western Canada 25, 15, or perhaps even 5 years from now, if the present rapid deterioration of our prairie soils goes on unchecked.

Vanishing Soil. Dust clouds are indisputable evidence of the fact that our prairie top soils are being destroyed. Managed carefully they will produce abundant food; used carelessly they will become infertile and subject to severe erosion by wind and water. From the standpoint of human welfare and world peace the maintenance of Canada's great food-producing resources — our prairie soils — is of paramount importance. It is, in fact, the very foundation of our national security.

A National Problem. The problem of conserving our prairie soils is of national importance and demands the attention of every citizen of the country, rural and urban. In this important work the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration is leading the way, but more funds, more technicians and, most of all, more conservation education are needed. Prairie farmers themselves must be the chief motive force in the trend towards the care and conservation of our rich land resources. It is important, therefore, that more and more farmers and land owners in Western Canada realize that the soil is their primary capital asset, and that its proper care is the first commandment of good farming. The good farmers of Western Canada are "keeping the land where it belongs". In doing this they are turning the master key which unlocks the door to a permanent and prosperous prairie agriculture.

POLITICAL IMPLICATION

If External Affairs Minister "Mike" Pearson is successful in the Algoma East Election on October 25, it may mark the start of a career which might make him a new strong contender to succeed Rt. Hon. Louis St. Laurent, now 66, as new leader of the Liberal Party, according to a story heard behind the scene in this capital where impartial observers say that Mr. Pearson, now 51, is heading for this post and that is one of the reasons he gave up the certainty of his top civil service job for the uncertainty of political life.

NEWS NOTES

Mrs. Amy Abbott and daughter Karen are visiting in Wrentham as guests of Mrs. Abbott's sister Mrs. Helen Jones.

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